

Common Obstacles to The Gospel in Islam

Understanding their Perspective to Better Answer Them

- **Trinity:** Muslims believe God is one, and Mohammad is God's messenger. This is the absolute foundation of their faith; so, when they hear us say that God is 3-in-1, or that $1+1+1 = 1$, this is extremely difficult for them to accept. In every other situation, $1+1+1=3$. It's a very challenging concept for most who were not brought up hearing this in their own home, or even generally, in their own culture. When we take time to think about it, it is one of the great mysteries of God that we believe about him, because he has revealed it to us in his Word; but it's not something we can understand deeply beyond what he has revealed to us. The Holy Spirit helps believers to experience the Trinity in our lives and illuminates our understanding of the Trinity in Scripture. But the Trinity is not a question of logic or reason, but of faith in God's revealed nature. Do your best to explain it with grace and repeat it as often with patience and care. Always be careful to say this is what God has said about himself in Scripture, and not what man has said or created. Ultimately though, the HS needs to help them to accept God as he has revealed himself in Scripture, the Godhead, 3-in-1. So, pray for them often in this regard.
- **Son of God:** It implies that God is a sexual being. Remind them we too do not believe this, and we too find it deeply offensive. Make sure that they understand what you do believe: that God is not a sexual being. He is absolutely holy and set apart from us. Help them to understand what the title Son of God means and how it reveals how God views and relates to Jesus. Emphasize how much God loves Jesus, and talk about the role of the first son. It is his responsibility to carry on not only the work of his father, but also to bring continued honor to his name. Talk about how the first son inherits all from his father, including his possessions and responsibilities, and that it comes with great responsibility. Ultimately, the son carries on the work and legacy of his father. In that way, God loves Jesus deeply, as his only Son.

In addition, you can also emphasize or point out something both Christians and Muslims agree upon-- that Jesus (*Isa*) was born to his mother Mary (*Mariam*), who was a virgin when he was born. Both faiths believe that God's Spirit caused Mary to become miraculously pregnant with Jesus. Thus, though God is not a sexual being, his own Spirit brought about her pregnancy, according to God's wishes. Thus, the title, God's Son stands true.

- **Death of Jesus on Cross:** They don't believe Jesus died on the cross, because God would not do that to one of his most faithful and important prophets. Dying on a cross was seen as a disgrace and curse, not befitting a true prophet of God. Most Muslims believe that God raised Jesus to Heaven and replaced him on the cross with someone else who looked like Jesus. It was the "look-alike Jesus" who died on that cross. This is called the substitutionary theory in Islam. Some say

God substituted Judas, others Simon the Cyrene, etc.—in short, he put someone there who “deserved” it.

The big point for them is that Jesus was never crucified, never killed, and in fact never died. Instead, he was raised up to God in heaven, who would not allow him to die such a shameful and disgraceful death. (Look up shame/honor culture). Most Muslims believe that Jesus now waits to return before the Day of Judgment and complete the works God has prepared for him. After that, he will die a natural death as a Muslim and be buried next to Mohammad. So, while Jesus is clearly an extremely honored and important prophet in Islam, he has been robbed of his deity, his position as Lord over all, and his power to save mankind from their sins. So, what does this have to do with his death on the cross? We know that if Jesus did not die, there is no sacrifice for our sins, thus no atonement or reconciliation between Jesus’ followers and God. It means the cross is empty of power and the resurrection has no meaning. Jesus’ death on the cross is a deeply important topic, but one that the HS has to help them accept. He must show them who Jesus is, why he had to die for us, and what his resurrection means. Our job is to faithfully, patiently and repeatedly, help them see this from God’s truth and his Scripture.

- Jesus is Fully God/Fully Man: For Muslims, this idea is blasphemy in its purest form. God cannot be compared to us or share in our broken world in any way. If God is also fully man, as seen in Jesus, God is no longer set-apart from his creation. It is a direct contradiction of God’s absolutely transcendence above his creation. This means that he is far removed from us, and he is not like us at all. It brings the idea of his absoluteness holiness and transcendence into question. Remember that in Islam, you can know about God, but you can never know him directly or personally. Help them to understand who Jesus is in relation to the prophets, to God the Father (creator) and why it was so important that he came. Do your best to explain, but HS needs to change their heart on this.
- Bible Corrupted: Point to the fact that Islam accepts the 5 books of Moses, the Psalms, and the Gospel* (4 gospels). Challenge them to say if Quran and Mohammad accepted them, then is God so weak that he would allow his holy Scriptures to be defiled? Does he allow his true and accepted Scriptures to be changed? Also, you can show them versions of the Quran that have been translated into other languages. There are a few digital apps you download that show the Quran in other languages. (Kind of like a Bible app for the Quran). Also, challenge them to pray and ask God if they should read it. They should have no fear of how God might lead them if they trust him.
- Grace vs. Good Works: Firstly, we have to remember that Muslims follow a works-based, law-driven system their whole life. That is a primary shaper in their worldview, and a significant principle in Islam up until the point they believe. I have often heard Muslims, or former Muslims who are now young believers, say “How can a God who constantly forgives our sins over and over, still be holy, just

and all powerful?" They especially think this about new believers who keep repeating the same sins over and over too often. They often feel like a God who would endlessly forgive everything all the time, is somehow weak, being taken advantage, or gullible. This idea is not befitting God, so they struggle with the concept of grace over works. Help them to see that God has not forgiven us "willy-nilly," but rather Jesus has stood in our place and taken the punishment for all of our sins. He suffered and died in intensely unimaginable ways for believers, and because of that alone we experience God's redeeming grace. God did not allow all of those sins to go unpunished; instead, Jesus bore the punishment for us. Help them to understand that God is still holy and just, a God of enormous power and glory. Yet he is also a God of immense grace and love, and has made a way for us to be reconciled to God through Christ, when we could not do this for ourselves.